Book Reviews

Cordelia Warr, *Dressing for Heaven: Religious Clothing in Italy, 1215–1545*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, hardback, pp. xx+263

This book uses Italian art from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries to examine the role of clothes as liminal objects during this period. The dates were not chosen arbitrarily, but stretch from the year of the Fourth Lateran Council, which forbade the foundation of new religious orders and thus limited the proliferation of different kinds of religious dress, to the Council of Trent, which marked a shift from the association of nudity in art with innocence to its linking with shame and damnation.

The book is organized primarily around a succession of case studies. One fifth of it considers the relationship between clothing and religious experience, roughly a third each is devoted to men and religious clothing and women and religious clothing, with the remainder analysing visual and literary accounts of dress in the Last Judgement. The work is well documented visually, with 17 colour plates and 89 black and white illustrations, and includes a comprehensive 25-page bibliography helpfully divided into primary and secondary sources.

The first chapter is detailed, but perhaps overly descriptive. Indeed, the whole book is marked by excellence of descriptive detail but rather lacks any strong leading arguments or ideas. This makes it a very good reference book, but not one to consult for sustained philosophical or theoretical contributions. Nevertheless, there are some insights to be gained among the descriptions.

One of the enjoyable parts of the book is the reminder of reasonings that may now seem strange but were entirely consistent with the logics of the time. For example, the belief that the Virgin's body was taken directly up into heaven posed a problem for those who valued relics of actual bodies as ways of connecting with deceased holy persons. Warr shows that it was this problem that allowed clothing to function as a relic in its own right: in the absence of a body, that was the only material link that was available. Pieces of the Virgin's clothing were claimed by various cities and associated with miracles, which no doubt added to the prestige, and hence power, of those cities.

The author shows how particular items of dress were associated with otherworldly meanings, such as the cloak of the Virgin or the monk's cowl as metaphors for salvation, and with evidence of heavenly approval: the Virgin shows Reginald of Orléans the habit of the Dominican order and thus the Dominicans can now claim that their appearance in the world is divinely sanctioned, while the Carmelites attain the same helpful status by maintaining that their habit had been worn by the prophet Elijah. Of course, clothing had useful distinguishing features as well, such as indicating religious status and membership of particular orders, and hence, as Warr rightly says, helped to impose a group identity.

The author's analysis of women's religious dress suggests that recognition was less important then the symbolic meanings of clothing and that 'In the lives of women religious, clothing symbolism was important in relation to their reward in heaven … many … perceived an inverse relationship between the clothing they wore in this life and that which they would receive in the next' (p. 141). The earthly clothing hierarchy would be inverted in the next life: resist the vanities of the mundane, and the compensation would come in heaven. In some cases, the dress of female saints was, after death, considered to have healing powers. Here, the dress as relic permits access to the world of miracles.

The book ends with an informative chapter on ideas about the role of clothing after death, and shows that the treatment of Michelangelo's *Last Judgement* of 1534–41 marked a pivotal

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shift between earlier and later understandings of the role of nudity in sacred art. Very early Christian thinkers such as Tertullian and Cyprian considered some theological problems around the notion of the Last Judgement and concluded that it was the naked body that would arise, not a body bedecked with dress or jewellery. Clothing in this context would be an unnecessary adornment rather than a covering decency, and would thus have no reason for ultramundane existence. The body here is understood in its naked innocence. This appears to have been Michelangelo's view in his treatment of the Final Day, but Warr shows that this was difficult for the contemporary audience to accept: 'In late medieval and Renaissance Italy, to strip someone of clothing was to strip away his or her acknowledged identity. For the medieval viewer nakedness or lack of clothes was synonymous with shame, humiliation and punishment' (p. 209). But the saved and damned alike were nude in Michelangelo's fresco, and the Council of Trent decided that some judicious loinclothing needed to be done in an era where the innocence of the naked could no longer be accepted. Just as importantly, perhaps, 'Artists who depicted the saved without clothes deprived the viewer of clues as to who received the heavenly reward' (p. 219). The role of dress in navigating our own world is well understood, but by the mid sixteenth century it seems as if became a necessity in navigating the way to heaven as well.

The book is for a rather specialized audience, and those with art historical and descriptive inclinations are well catered for. Readers looking for more in the way of abstract ideas or sustained arguments are less likely to be satisfied.

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Beth Cook, Rebecca Reynolds and Catherine Speight (eds), *Museums and Design Education: Looking to Learn, Learning to See*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, hardback, £55, pp. xxv+201

In Leeds, there are many informal partnerships between museums and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). During 2011 for example, Leeds Art Gallery invited students from Leeds College of Art to curate a response to Artists Rooms: Damien Hirst, held at the Gallery from July to October. With control over a major space in the Gallery, and access to the entire permanent collection, the small group of students curated 'A Series of Objects Artfully Arranged'. This is a testament not only to the skill and confidence of the students, but also to the gallery for giving them such a high profile and exciting project to work on. Other examples include Armley Mills Museum, which regularly shows site-responsive artworks by students, and the Royal Armouries who, amongst many others, hosts both student projects and interns.

These projects are not unique to Leeds. The wealth of examples of collaborative projects, which exist between museums and HEIs, can certainly be seen as evidence of the radical redevelopments in the purpose and practice of museum education in past decades. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) have funded a wide range of Collaborative Doctoral Awards between museums and HEIs in recent years. In this context, perhaps we should wonder why it has taken so long to see a book dedicated to museums and HE teaching. With the word 'design' in the title, Museums and Design Education: Looking to Learn, Learning to See might at first appear to be aimed at quite a narrow audience of educators working in the field of design. While some case studies are strongly design related, this book is vastly broader and, as a result, is a powerful argument for the value of collaborative working across museums and HEIs. The book emerges from the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Design (CELTD), a research focussed partnership between Brighton University, the Royal College of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). Many of the case studies have come from the CELTD, as do the book's three editors who are also significant contributors.

Chapters one to three provide some particularly useful contextual information, highlighting issues that prevent consistent working partnerships. Kate Arnold-Forster and Catherine Speight in 'Museums and Higher Education: A Context for Collaboration' suggest that while museums and HEIs share similar beliefs in the value of knowledge and learning, their different pedagogical strategies have 'impeded integrated activity and the opportunity of shared agendas between the sectors' (p. 6). Catherine Speight in 'Museums and Higher Education: A New Specialist Service?' expands this thesis further, suggesting that neither institution actually

seems to understand the needs of the other, and the needs of students are 'often subsumed into those of adult learners' (p. 11). A quick survey of the education pages of national museum websites revealed huge differences between institutions and the way in which they prioritise and promote their HE provision. 'Bridging Perspectives – Approaches to Learning in Museums' is a particularly useful summary and comparison of pedagogical approaches. It is here that one of the main problems of museums incorporating HE students into their programming is highlighted. It is much easier to devise 'off the shelf' programming for primary and secondary schools to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. The vagaries of the HE subject benchmarks, and the diversity of ways in which these are interpreted make it impossible for museums to devise HE 'bookable lessons', even if this was desirable.

'Creative Differences: Deconstructing the Conceptual Learning Spaces of Higher Education and Museums' by Jos Boys provides clear analysis of pedagogical approaches and recommendations for improved collaborative working. After noting that many projects are based on 'individual enthusiasts' and 'piecemeal' collaborations (p. 43), Boys' paper articulates a number of ways to develop these relationships, focussing on improving the discussions between HEIs and museums and creating stronger communities of practice leading to a greater sharing of knowledge and pedagogy.

Chapters seven to ten focus on object based learning, and this is where the nuances of 'looking to learn' and 'learning to see' are explored through case studies which examine connections between museum understanding of object based learning, and student use of visual research. Given the heavy emphasis on the CELTD and the V&A, I wondered about the relevance here of an Australian case study, summarising work already published elsewhere. 'Design Learning in an Australian Museum' by Geoffrey Caban and Carol Scott is, however, clearly relevant to the book's thesis, comparing student responses to learning in the traditional HE format, the lecture, with student responses in a 'free choice' museum environment.

The last four chapters deal with the uses of technology in design education and museums. There is a general sense across these that, while technology is often seen as the latest and best methodology for engaging students, particular care needs to be taken to ensure that this does not distract from direct interaction with museum collections. Two papers that work particularly well together are 'The Virtual Museum' by Mark Carnall and Beth Cook, and 'Learning in Second LIfe' by Karina Rodriguez-Echabarria and Lars Wieneke. The first provides readers with an overview of what constitutes 'virtual' and questions the problem of keeping the 'focus on education, whilst still retaining the element of fun' (p. 171), an argument which has earlier precedents (Greenhalgh 1989). The second, examines the virtual world of Second Life and provides some useful ideas about how these environments may be experimented with.

The book's strength lies in the number of case studies it provides across 14 chapters. This will be inspirational to many museum educators seeking to make new connections with university departments. The summaries of education and learning styles will be extremely useful to both students and professionals alike. As an academic teaching museum studies, who has taught 'design' based Visual Communication and worked for many years as a museum educator, even I hesitated about the relevance of this book to my own interests, leading me to wonder whether the title is narrowing the audience of this book too much. I also wondered whether it would have been more useful as a publication if it had focussed solely on the work of the CELTD, as there were references to projects which may have been useful additions to the book, particularly S. Fisher's 2007 report 'How do HE Tutors and Students Use Museum Collections in Design?' which is cited in several of the chapters as an unpublished report. These are minor questions however, given that this book is a timely and important reminder that museum education is not just schools.

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Christopher R. Marshall (ed.), *Sculpture and the Museum*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011, hardback, £55.00, pp. 286.

Not so long ago, the subject of sculpture and the museum led scholars to reference Ad Reinhardt's joke about sculpture being something one bumps into while looking at a painting, a light quip that encapsulates the relegation of sculpture to the peripheral vision of both spectator and institution. That none of the contributors to *Sculpture and the Museum* ever mentions Reinhardt's line is testament to the seriousness and significance of this book, an in-depth presentation of critical moments in the history of the collection and display of sculpture. Christopher R. Marshall describes the book, an outcome of a 2005 conference, as 'the first stand-alone contribution towards what we hope will become a more defined literature on the topic' (p. 5). His selection of essays featuring a group of scholars with wide-ranging disciplinary and methodological approaches and interests and, at different stages of their careers, makes for a well-rounded, lively and varied collection of voices. It is a volume in *Subject/Object: New Studies in Sculpture*, the series commissioned by the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds.

A single definitive history of centuries of exhibiting sculpture is in itself difficult to delineate, given the unique set of circumstances that led to the formation of individual collections with unique display histories. Understandably, publications on sculpture have tended to concentrate on particular periods (Baker 2000; Potts 2000) or regions (Curtis 2003), or individual exhibitions (Rattemeyer 2010). Each section of *Sculpture and the Museum* guides the reader through histories of sculpture collections and their changing displays, neither constructing a teleological narrative nor constraining sculpture's varied exhibition histories. Marshall groups the essays in three more or less chronologically ordered sections, including: museums and sculptors' legacies; museum displays and changing attitudes to the institutional status of sculpture; and the design of display settings in relation to new sculpture.

The first part of the book pursues four very different sets of circumstances surrounding the formation and development of institutions or collections dedicated to sculptors. Johannes Myssok traces the transformation and relocation of Canova's studio into a museum, and Pauline Ann Hoath explores the development of the Flaxman Gallery at University College London. Antoinette Le Normand-Romain considers the consequences of the Musée Rodin's sale of posthumous editions of Rodin sculptures (which in itself contributed to the formation of Rodin collections around the world), and she also charts the ever-expanding range of approaches to exhibiting the artist's work. Finally, Sarah Stanners focuses on the development of the Henry Moore Sculpture Centre at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, and the compelling negotiations involved in Moore's desire for a dedicated space for his work in a national institution. Stanners revives Moore's legacy in contemporary Toronto by neatly framing her story with Simon Starling's *Infestation Piece (Musselled Moore)* (2006–8), a work comprised of a reproduction of Moore's *Warrior with Shield* (1953–4) infested with zebra mussels, and submerged in Lake Ontario.

Moving from Starling's infested Moore replica to plaster replicas, the second section (the formation of sculpture collections and displays) begins with Marietta Cambareri's fascinating investigation of the formation of the Italian Renaissance sculpture collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and changing attitudes toward the integrated display of plaster casts with originals as the collection of original sculptures grew over 1870 to 1918. Particularly striking (and amusing for any curator) is the plea from Matthew S. Prichard, the Director's Secretary, to label all casts with: 'THE ORIGINAL DOES NOT LOOK LIKE THIS' (Marshall 2011: 104). In many institutions, the integration of originals and replicas helped to contextualize the objects, but at the MFA this view was contested. By contrast, Thayer Tolles traces the century-long problem of displaying a single sculpture – George Grey Barnard's *Struggle of the Two Natures of Man* (1888, carved 1892–4) – in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Massive in scale and stylistically unconventional, its peripatetic life at the Metropolitan reveals a great deal about attitudes to the display of monumental sculpture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Other case studies in this section also involve tracing the physical journeys sculptures make, and how those journeys represent particular responses to socio-political and cultural change. Marianne Kinkel looks at the history of Malvina Hoffman's *Races of Mankind* display at the Field Museum, Chicago, and its journey to Malcolm X College and back, as representative

of changing attitudes to race from the 1930s to the present. Suzanne MacLeod considers the values and meanings attached to the Sultanganj Buddha in the collections of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery by looking at its periodic redisplay in light of art historical scholarship on the Buddha. From 1885 to 1998, the Buddha is moved from gallery to gallery, at one time occupying a location close to the male toilets, until it is finally designated an appropriately spacious Buddha Gallery, 'a physical and conceptual repositioning of the Buddha into one of the most significant locations … on the "art" side of the building and on the main visual axis from the Rotunda, the key access and gathering point in the museum' (Marshall 2011: 168).

In the last section, essays on the relationships between architectural environments, contemporary sculpture, institutions and interventions successfully incorporate into their approaches the work of architectural history and art theory. Whereas Christopher R. Marshall's beautifully forensic analysis of the complex series of changes to the design of the Duveen Gallery at Tate Britain reveals struggles over how to accommodate ever-changing contemporary sculpture, Wouter Davidts explores the different ways in which artists have responded to the unchanging void of the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern. In the last essay, Khadija Carroll La conducts a wide-ranging historic survey of artists' interventions in museum collections. With the senses and the bodily as starting points, her proposal that interventions 'ultimately bring into dialogue the sculptural body and the viewing body' fuels her original and stimulating critique of and theoretical engagement with the subject.

Sculpture and the Museum is a very welcome addition to the field of sculpture studies, a field with its own particular history, inextricably linked to Henry Moore and the Henry Moore Foundation. When the Foundation announced plans to establish a Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture in 1979, the study of sculpture was a marginal part of art history and warranted greater attention through dedicated projects and funding programmes; in the 1980s and 1990s, commitment to sculpture and its discourse was, in some senses, linked to a certain critical, political position. As the *Subject/Object* series grows, and as research on sculpture continues to flourish as a result of the Henry Moore Institute's activities and resources, sculpture seems much less marginal now. The rationale for singling out sculpture, or an intervention or installation, over other media categories is more likely to be based on interest than on ignorance. A painting might just as well become something one brushes up against when looking at a sculpture.

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Natasha Vall, *Cultural Region. North East England, 1945–2000*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011, hardback £60.00, pp. 178.

Natasha Vall's latest effort, *Cultural Region. North East England, 1945–2000*, is a tremendously well-researched analysis of the birth and growth of Northeast England as a distinctive cultural region and the region's attempts at owning its own cultural representation. Vall seeks to demonstrate how national and local cultural policy affected cultural identity and expression in England's Northeast region during the second half of the twentieth century.

For Vall, cultural expression comes in several forms: radio, television, artistic representation in the performing, literary and visual arts, and riverscapes. Several factors shape the identity of these cultural expressions including dialect, vernacular, class, gender, shared history and political events. These factors are both regional and national in scope, with the Northeast being intrinsically different from much of the rest of Britain. For that reason, national culture (such as the popularity of certain London-created television programmes) often failed not only to affect the culturally dissimilar Northeast, but also to portray a true version of the minority region.

After the Second World War, several television programmes developed around northern coal mining themes, such as working-class culture and issues in masculinity. These programmes were created less because of a desire to represent the Northeast or appeal to a Northeastern audience; rather, they were largely the result of the fact that the local mining industry had come to represent a symbol of Britain's ambition (p. 59). Although topics of Northern realism reached wide appeal within the Northeast region, the catalyst for placing the items on television and radio was more to draw in the majority of the nation, namely middle-class Southerners, than to cater to local audiences upon whom many programmes were based. When creating programmes that used local colour, Vall is careful to note the difficulty had by writers to balance regional dialect with the vernacular so as not to lose a middle- and upper-class audience.

In 1939, writer Edwin Lewis and Cecil McGivern, a producer and graduate of Durham University, created *Tenement*, a play that made use of Northeastern idioms and engaged in both the vernacular and the popular culture of sports rivalries in the Northeast. The programme, aired on a regional BBC radio station, was successful in terms of reviews and listenership. Thirty years later, however, Vall notes that with Southern drama schools accounting for the majority of professional training in acting, it was 'difficult to recruit actors who could work in "accents" other than the "quaint form of English located halfway between Broadcasting House and Buckingham Palace"' (p. 27). Despite marginalization by London's cultural elite, overall, the period from 1945–2000 saw tremendous expansion in ownership of the Northeast region's history and culture, particularly outside the realms of radio and television.

Beginning in the late 1950s, Vall describes a livelier cultural awakening in the form of public history projects and 'local urban vernacular imagery' (p. 75). Frank Atkinson established Beamish Museum, England's first open-air museum, in 1971. The theme of the collection was industrial material culture, although the public was encouraged to donate many different representations of Northeastern 'folk-life'. The museum's popularity and attendance during a bank holiday in 1971 was a national record, seconded only by the British Museum's Tutankhamen exhibition (p. 72). Local poetry and performance art boomed during this period, as well. While influences from American radical poetry could be seen in these English movements, Vall describes Northeastern spoken word performances as a 'cross-over between avant-garde poets and a celebration of vernacular music and dialect' (p. 77).

Funding and participation in Northeastern public 'folk-life' eventually declined during the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party took office. Cultural policy during this time was defined by 'flagship' cultural projects that would contribute to 'overall urban image improvements' rather than the personal expression seen in the 1960s (p. 125). Using the 'America model' for urban development, private and public development groups transformed parts of England's Northeastern industrial cities, particularly along waterfront areas. These areas initially fostered the growth of cafes, offices and other amenities that would appeal to middle-class families. The 1990s soon brought opportunities for public art projects and other cultural projects that were funded by both development corporations and community-based organizations.

While *Cultural Region* is a strong substantive work, its organization is difficult to follow at times. Throughout the book, it is unclear why Vall uses 1945 as a starting point. Much of the chapter on radio discusses attempts to expand radio popularity into the Northeast during the 1920s and 1930s, well before the war. By the fifth chapter, she mentions that the Second World War 'represented a break with both voluntaristic tradition of cultural improvement, as well as the private patronage of the arts' (p. 98). Later, Vall cites Dougan's *Northern Arts: The People of the North* in which the post-war Northeast is depicted as a 'cultural desert' (p. 123); however, Vall never explicitly responds to Dougan's assertion. Could either the funding issue (p. 98) or

prior scholarship on the subject (p. 123) be the reason she chose to begin officially with 1945 for her analysis? Was it because of Continental Europe's inclusion of cultural reconstruction during the period? Vall fails to make her reasoning clear.

Still, the book's research is striking, particularly the oral histories. Vall combed through corporate and government archives to examine board-meeting notes. She uses a substantial amount of secondary sources to reinforce national trends in radio, television and the arts. Most impressively, she cites interviews with the same subjects about whom she is writing, such as Connie Pickard and Peter Stark. Vall's analysis and these oral histories will be important for future scholarship on English cultural policy and regional histories of the Northeast.

Cultural Region presents similarities that can be drawn between England's Northeast region and the search for identity in culturally disenfranchised regions of other nations (the American South, for instance). The work also serves as a strong reminder that institutional histories cannot stand alone; they must be taken in the context of national and regional movements. Overall, *Cultural Region* is a strong history of the growth of one region's awareness, search and practice of a distinctive regional cultural identity.

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